

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

confession ; and not only then, but on many other occasions, did she manifest to me, with modest and humble words, not only my hidden deeds, but also the thoughts that were passing in my heart, the good as well as the evil."¹

On a later occasion, Catherine was to write to Francesco : " I can well call thee dear; so much art thou costing me in tears and labour and in much bitter sorrow." But, for the present, the young man was in the first fervour of his conversion. " From being a bestial man and well-nigh demoniacal," he says, " I had come to true knowledge and to life according to the spirit." His relations and associates strove by all possible means to draw him from his new mode of living. Two especially disliked his change to good—" and this, as I deem, because we had previously been the most concordant in the lascivious vanities of the world." One of these was a connection by marriage, Neri di Guccio degli Ugurghieri (a member of the oldest feudal family of Siena), and the other a companion, Niccolo di Bindo Ghelli. Whenever they met Francesco, they would abuse Catherine, and declared themselves ready to say the same to her face. " Come then," said Francesco at last, " and I will introduce you to her. If you convince her, I promise to return with you to my old life ; but take good heed, for, if you go to her, before you depart she will convert you, and make you both go to confess your sins." That, the two protested, Christ Himself could not induce them to do ; but, nevertheless, a few days afterwards, they accompanied him to the Saint's house. And, whereas they had come with the intention of saying everything bad against her, when they were in her presence, they found they could not utter a word :—

" Then she sweetly began to reprove them for many words which they had used many times against me, even as though she herself had been bodily always present when they said these things, albeit she had never heard anything about them from me, of which may God be my witness. Having heard these words of the virgin, they were touched and confused, and began to weep bitterly, nor did they answer anything but this : ° Tell us, lady, *tio Francisci de Mahvoltis*, cap. i., Casanatense MS., pp. 430-4.33.